

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 02963 242027Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 2963

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TAGS: PINT, IT, US, NATO

SUBJ: RESPONSES OF ITALIAN POLITICAL PARTIES TO PRESIDENT
FORD'S RESPONSE RE POSSIBLE ENTRY OF PCI INTO GOVERNMENT

REF: ROME 2869

1. SUMMARY. A FLURRY OF PRESS INTEREST WAS SET OFF BY PRESIDENT FORD'S ANSWER TO A QUESTION CONCERNING USG VIEWS REGARDING POSSIBLE PCI ENTRANCE INTO GOI. CORRIERE DELLA SERA INTERVIEWED DC, PSI AND PRI PARTY SECRETARIES. DC SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI GAVE A VERY FUZZY, CIRCUITOUS RESPONSE WHICH L'UNITA EFFECTIVELY PLAYED BACK AS PROOF OF "FORD'S INADMISSIBLE INTERFERENCE" IN ITALIAN POLITICS. WITH EXCEPTION OF BITING PIECE OF SATIRE IN ROME'S CONSERVATICE DAILY, IL TEMPO, BULK OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION FOCUSED ON "LEGITIMACY" OF US PRESIDENT COMMENTING ON "ITALIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS" RATHER THAN ON MERIT OF FORD'S STATEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT FORD'S STATEMENT CORRIERE DELLA SERA ASKED TWO QUESTIONS OF PARTY SECRETARIES ZACCAGNINI OF DC, DE MARTINO OF PSI AND BIASINI OF PRI. AFTER FAIRLY ACCURATE ONE-PARAGRAPH SUMMARY OF PRESIDENT FORD COMMENTS, CORRIERE POSED THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: "IN YOUR JUDGEMENT, WAS THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT'S INTERVENTION LEGITIMATE CONCERNING THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ROME 02963 242027Z

EVENTUAL ENTRANCE OF THE PCI INTO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE INCOM-

PATIBILITY BETWEEN THIS PARTICIPATION AND (ITALY'S) REMAINING IN NATO? FOLLOW-UP QUESTION WAS WHETHER SECRETARIES THOUGHT FORD'S ATTITUDE COULD INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF THEIR PARTIES?

3. AACCAGNINI REPLIED THAT "PERHAPS (FORD'S STATEMENT) WAS JUST A PERSONAL OPINION DICTATED BY AMERICAN ELECTORAL CLIMATE." EVERYONE IS FREE TO EXPRESS THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS." WHAT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, IS THAT "HE CANNOT PROPOSE TO INTERFERE IN THE LIFE OF OUR COUNTRY WHICH IS DETERMINED ONLY BY THE CHOICES MADE BY THE ITALIAN PEOPLE IN FREE ELECTIONS." REGARDING HOW THIS MIGHT AFFECT DC STRATEGY, ZACCAGNINI REPLIED THAT "DC STRATEGY IS SET BY THE NATIONAL CONGRESS BASED ON ITS OWN HISTORICAL TRADITIONS DERIVED FROM THE TEACHINGS OF STURZO AND DE GASPERI, ADJUSTING THE OPERATIONAL LINES IN ACCORD WITH THE EXIGENCIES OF TODAY'S SOCIETY IN THE EXCLUSIVE INTEREST OF ITALY AND IN THE CONSTANT DEFENSE OF LIBERTY."

4. DE MARTINO STATED THAT "NO ITALIAN PARTY CAN ACCEPT THAT ANOTHER NATION, EVEN AN ALLEY, SETS LIMITS ON THE FULL EXERCISE OF OUR SOVEREIGNTY. ANY LESS WOULD BE TO ACCEPT A SYSTEM OF LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY WHICH WE HAVE ALWAYS REJECTED FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE EAST." REGARDING PSI STRATEGY, HE AFFIRMED THAT "WE CONSIDER UNJUSTIFIED PRESIDENT FORD'S OPINION THAT THE EVENTUAL PRESENCE OF A COMMUNIST PARTY IN COALITION WITH OTHER DEMOCRATIC PARTIES IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH ITALIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. SUCH A SITUATION HAS ALREADY EXISTED, FIRST IN ICELAND AND THEN IN PORTUGAL WITHOUT GREAT DISTURBANCE TO THE POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC POSITION OF THE ALLIANCE AND WITHOUT WEAKENING IT".

5. THE REPUBLICAN SECRETARY BIASINI RESPONDED THAT CORRIERE'S QUESTION DISPLAYED A "COMPLEX" FROM WHICH ITALY SEEMS TO SUFFER CONCERNING THE US. IN GENERAL TERMS HE FELT IT WAS LEGITIMATE FOR A COUNTRY TO SPECULATE ON WHAT IT MIGHT NEED TO DO IF SOME OTHER COUNTRY ACTS IN A GIVEN WAY. HE ASKS RHETORICALLY IF CORRIERE IS NOT GUILTY OF SAME IN REQUESTING THAT THE GOI DAILY PROCLAIM THAT "WITHOUT A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN SPAIN, A COMMON POLICY CANNOT BE FOLLOWED BETWEEN ITALY AND SPAIN". (I.E. SPAIN MAY NOT JOIN THE EEC OR NATO). REGARDING A POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 02963 242027Z

STRATEGY FOR ITALY, BIASINI SAID THAT COMPLETELY APART FROM THE LEGITIMACY OF A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT EXPRESSING ITS OPINION, "IN A DISCRETE MANNER IN THE OPPORTUNE FORA, IS QUESTION OF WHETHER THE INTERESTED COUNTRY OR ITS LEADERS SHOULD ACCEPT THE ADVICE OFFERED. IN A COUNTRY WHERE LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY ARE ASSURED--AND ITALY IS FORTUNATELY IN THAT CATEGORY--THE FINAL WORD RESTS WITH THE CITIZENS."

6. THE PCI RESPONDED ON THE FRONT PAGES OF L'UNITA AND IN BERLINGUER'S SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT DURING THE "CONFIDENCE DEBATE" (SEE REFTEL). LAST SATURDAY L'UNITA PRINTED THE ENTIRETY OF THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AND THEN COMMENTED THAT WHAT MOST AMAZED THEM ABOUT THIS "BRUTAL INTERFERENCE" WAS THAT ITALY'S LEADERS HAD NOT SEEN FIT TO DEFEND ITALIAN DIGNITY (WHEN FORD MADE HIS STATEMENTS IN EUROPE) AND STILL DO NOT FEEL NEED TO "DEFEND THE INDEPENDENCE OF OUR COUNTRY AND THE FREE CHOICES OF OUR PEOPLE." L'UNITA HAD THE CHEEK TO ADDRESS ITSELF TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO ASK TO "MEDITATE UPON HOW MUCH CREDIT THEY SHOULD PUT IN A MAN WHO--NOTWITHSTANDING THE LESSONS OF THE PAST, NOR THE CLAMOROUS REVELATIONS OF THE PAST MONTHS--CONTINUES TO COMMIT THE UNITED STATES TO A POLICY OF SHAMEFUL INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES."

7. FRONT PAGE HEADLINES IN MONDAY'S L'UNITA PRAISED THE "SOLIDARITY" DISPLAYED BY ZACCAGNINI AND PSI AND PRI PARTY SECRETARIES IN THEIR CORRIERE DELLA SERA REBUFFS OF "THE IN-ADMISSIBLE INTERFERENCES OF PRESIDENT FORD." COMMENT: L'UNITA WAS FORCED TO SEVERELY EDIT AND DISTORT, THE PRI SECRETARY, BIASINI'S STATEMENT TO MAKE IT COINCIDE WITH THE OTHERS. END COMMENT.

8. IL TEMPO COMMENTATOR, NINO BADANO, WITH EFFECTIVE SARCASM, COMPARED USG'S RECORD OF INTERFERENCE WITH THAT OF THE SOVIET UNION FROM ESTONIA TO ANGOLA. HE DISCOUNTED DE MARTINO'S COMMENTS ON THE GROUNDS THAT "A SOCIALIST LIKE HIM COULD NOT SPEAK OTHERWISE." BADANO COULD NOT FORGIVE ZACCAGNINI, HOWEVER, FOR FIRST TREATING FORD'S STATEMENT "CONDESCENDINGLY" AND SUPERFICALLY RATHER THAN DEALING WITH ITS SUBSTANCE; AND SECOND FOR "DEPLORING THE WARNING ITSELF IN WORDS LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE USED BY L'UNITA."

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ROME 02963 242027Z

9. COMMENT: ONE CAN SURMISE THAT ZACCAGNINI HOPED HIS FUZZY ANSWER DEFENDING ITALIAN AUTONOMY MIGHT SOMEHOW PLACATE EVERYONE. HE PROBABLY DID NOT EVEN INTEND TO OFFEND US. WHAT IS, OF COURSE, FRUSTRATING IS THAT THIS TYPE OF STATEMENT IS THEN USED SO EFFECTIVELY BY THE PCI TO DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS LEADING "THE OTHER DEMOCRATIC PARTIES" IN ATTEMPT TO PRESERVE ITALIAN INDEPENDENCE AND SERVE ITALIAN INTERESTS. WE WILL BE BRINGING THIS FACT TO THE ATTENTION OF DC CONTACTS. EQUALLY FRUSTRATING IS THE FACT THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE MEDIA SUCCEEDS IN STEERING THE DISCUSSION OF US POLICY STATEMENTS VIS-AVIS PCI ENTRANCE INTO GOVERNMENT AND ITS EFFECT ON THE WEST AWAY FROM THE MERITS OF THE CASE AND ON TO QUESTION OF "US INTERFERENCE." AND YET, UNLESS OUR CONTACTS--PLANNED AND CASUAL--ARE MERELY TELLING US WHAT THEY THINK WE WANT TO HEAR, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE MAJORITY IN THIS COUNTRY APPRECIATE OUR EXPRESSIONS OF

INTEREST AND WOULD BE DISHEARTENED WERE WE TO SIT BACK AND
SAY NOTHING.VOLPE

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